

The Spanish American War: Crucible of Empire

Background: Roosevelt charging up Kettle Hill, the Rough Riders and the sinking of *The Maine*—these are what many people commonly know about the United States' 1898 war with Spain. What they may not remember is that this was the war that moved the United States to center stage as a world power.

Watch the following excerpt and take notes on the below prompts.

1. Clip One: The Cuban Rebellion

- Describe the background the Cuban Rebellion.
- Why does the United States get involved?

2. Clip Two: DeLome Letter

Describe the contents of the DeLome Letter.
How does the American public react?
Who is Hearst?

3. Clip Three: U.S. Prepares for War

Describe how prepared the United States was for War?

4. Clip Four: The U.S. in the Philippines
Describe U.S. treatment in the Philippines?
What was Taft's role in the Philippines?

5. Clip Five: Epilogue
Was conquest of the Philippines a success? Explain.

What was the result of Cuba? Explain.

In your opinion, do you believe that the U.S. transition of becoming an imperial power was worth it? Why? Explain.

Name: _____
Acquiring New Lands

Directions:
Using chapter 18.3, bullet three to four facts about U.S. relations with the Philippines, Guam, Cuba and China.

Philippines	Puerto Rico	Cuba	China

Reflect:
After evaluating the relationship the United States established with the above four nations, how would you characterize American imperialism?

How was the U.S. policy toward China different from the U.S. policy toward the Philippines? To what can you attribute the difference?

3. McKinley Submits a War Message (1898)

Despite the belated concessions of Spain, McKinley sent his war message to Congress on April 11, 1898. His nerves were giving way under the constant clamor for war; his heart went out to the mistreated Cubans. (He had anonymously contributed \$5000 for their relief.) He realized that Spain's offer of an armistice, at

the discretion of her commander, did not guarantee peace. The rebels had to agree on terms, and Spain had shown a talent for breaking promises and protracting negotiations. Further delay would only worsen the terrible conditions. Among the reasons that McKinley here gives Congress for intervention, which ones are the soundest and which the weakest? Was there danger in intervening for humanitarian reasons?

The grounds for such intervention may be briefly summarized as follows:

First. In the cause of humanity and to put an end to the barbarities, bloodshed, starvation, and horrible miseries now existing there, and which the parties to the conflict are either unable or unwilling to stop or mitigate. It is no answer to say this is all in another country, belonging to another nation, and is therefore none of our business. It is specially our duty, for it is right at our door.

Second. We owe it to our citizens in Cuba to afford them that protection and indemnity for life and property which no government there can or will afford, and to that end to terminate the conditions that deprive them of legal protection.

Third. The right to intervene may be justified by the very serious injury to the commerce, trade, and business of our people and by the wanton destruction of property and devastation of the island.

Fourth, and which is of the utmost importance. The present condition of affairs in Cuba is a constant menace to our peace, and entails upon this government an enormous expense. With such a conflict waged for years in an island so near us and with which our people have such trade and business relations; when the lives and liberty of our citizens are in constant danger and their property destroyed and themselves ruined; where our trading vessels are liable to seizure and are seized at our very door by warships of a foreign nation; the expeditions of filibustering [freebooting] that we are powerless to prevent altogether, and the irritating questions and entanglements thus arising—all these and others that I need not mention, with the resulting strained relations, are a constant menace to our peace and compel us to keep on a semi-war footing with a nation with which we are at peace.

These elements of danger and disorder already pointed out have been strikingly illustrated by a tragic event which has deeply and justly moved the American people. I have already transmitted to Congress the report of the Naval Court of Inquiry on the destruction of the battleship *Maine* in the harbor of Havana during the night of the 15th of February. The destruction of that noble vessel has filled the national heart with inexpressible horror. Two hundred and fifty-eight brave sailors and marines and two officers of our Navy, reposing in the fancied security of a friendly harbor, have been hurled to death, [and] grief and want brought to their homes and sorrow to the nation.

The Naval Court of Inquiry, which, it is needless to say, commands the unqualified confidence of the government, was unanimous in its conclusion that the destruction of the *Maine* was caused by an exterior explosion—that

of a submarine mine.* It did not assume to place the responsibility. That remains to be fixed.

In any event, the destruction of the *Maine*, by whatever exterior cause, is a patent and impressive proof of a state of things in Cuba that is intolerable. That condition is thus shown to be such that the Spanish government cannot assure safety and security to a vessel of the American Navy in the harbor of Havana on a mission of peace, and rightfully there. . . .

[McKinley here refers to the offer by the Spanish minister to arbitrate the Maine, and simply adds, "To this I have made no reply."]

The long trial has proved that the object for which Spain has waged the war cannot be attained. The fire of insurrection may flame or may smolder with varying seasons, but it has not been, and it is plain that it cannot be, extinguished by present methods. The only hope of relief and repose from a condition which can no longer be endured is the enforced pacification of Cuba. In the name of humanity, in the name of civilization, in behalf of endangered American interests which give us the right and the duty to speak and to act, the war in Cuba must stop. . . .

The issue is now with the Congress. It is a solemn responsibility. I have exhausted every effort to relieve the intolerable condition of affairs which is at our doors. Prepared to execute every obligation imposed upon me by the Constitution and the law, I await your action.

Yesterday, and since the preparation of the foregoing message, official information was received by me that the latest decree of the Queen Regent of Spain directs General Blanco, in order to prepare and facilitate peace, to proclaim a suspension of hostilities, the duration and details of which have not yet been communicated to me.

This fact, with every other pertinent consideration, will, I am sure; have your just and careful attention in the solemn deliberations upon which you are about to enter. If this measure attains a successful result, then our aspirations as a Christian, peace-loving people will be realized. If it fails, it will be only another justification for our contemplated action.

* Assuming that the outside-explosion theory is correct—and it has been seriously challenged—the *Maine* might have been blown up by Cuban insurgents seeking to involve the United States in the war.

I. McKinley Prays for Guidance (1898)

What to do with the conquered Philippines? At first McKinley considered taking only a foothold at Manila, on the main island of Luzon. But this would be rendered militarily untenable if the remaining islands should fall into the hands of an unfriendly power, possibly Germany. The decision then lay between all or nothing. To hand back the islands to Spain was unthinkable. After fighting a war to free Cuba from Spanish misrule, America could hardly return the Filipinos, who had likewise risen in revolt, to Spanish misrule. To cut them completely loose might result in a mad scramble among the powers that would touch off a world war into which America might be drawn. McKinley had to make the decision while badly upset by the murder of his brother-in-law at the hands of a betrayed woman. He later told a group of fellow Methodists how he sought divine guidance, presumably late in October, 1898. How sound is McKinley's reasoning? Are there elements of racism in his thinking?

When next I realized that the Philippines had dropped into our laps, I confess I did not know what to do with them. I sought counsel from all sides—Democrats as well as Republicans—but got little help. I thought first we would take only Manila; then Luzon; then other islands, perhaps, also.

I walked the floor of the White House night after night until midnight; and I am not ashamed to tell you, gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance more than one night. And one night late it came to me this way—I don't know how it was, but it came:

- (1) That we could not give them back to Spain—that would be cowardly and dishonorable;
- (2) That we could not turn them over to France or Germany, our commercial rivals in the Orient—that would be bad business and discreditable;
- (3) That we could not leave them to themselves—they were unfit for self-government, and they would soon have anarchy and misrule worse than Spain's was; and
- (4) That there was nothing left for us to do but to take them all, and to educate the Filipinos, and uplift and civilize and Christianize them and by God's grace do the very best we could by them, as our fellow men, for whom Christ also died.

—And then I went to bed and went to sleep, and slept soundly, and the next morning I sent for the chief engineer of the War Department (our map-maker), and I told him to put the Philippines on the map of the United States (pointing to a large map on the wall of his office), and there they are and there they will stay while I am President!

1. This document is a report of an interview with McKinley at the White House, November 21, 1899, written by one of the interviewers and confirmed by others present. Published in *The Christian Advocate*, Jan. 22, 1903. It is here reprinted from C. S. Olcott, *The Life of William McKinley* (1916), II, 110-11.

The Platt Amendment, 1901

The United States occupied Cuba for five years after 1898. In 1901 Secretary of War Elihu Root drafted a set of articles (later known as the Platt Amendment) as guidelines for future United States-Cuban relations. Despite considerable Cuban resistance, they became a part of the 1902 Cuban Constitution. In following years the United States used the amendment several times to send troops to maintain or place friendly governments in power and to protect investments. The amendment was abrogated in 1934.

Whereas the Congress of the United States of America, by an Act approved March 2, 1901, provided as follows:

I.-That the government of Cuba shall never enter into any treaty or other compact with any foreign power or powers which will impair or tend to impair the independence of Cuba, nor in any manner authorize or permit any foreign power or powers to obtain by colonization or for military or naval purposes or otherwise, lodgement in or control over any portion of said island.

II. That said government shall not assume or contract any public debt, to pay the interest upon which, and to make reasonable sinking fund provision for the ultimate discharge of which, the ordinary revenues of the island, after defraying the current expenses of government shall be inadequate.

III. That the government of Cuba consents that the United States may exercise the right to intervene for the preservation of Cuban independence, the maintenance of a government adequate for the protection of life, property, and individual liberty, and for discharging the obligations with respect to Cuba imposed by the treaty of Paris on the United States, now to be assumed and undertaken by the government of Cuba.

IV. That all Acts of the United States in Cuba during its military occupancy thereof are ratified and validated, and all lawful rights acquired thereunder shall be maintained and protected.

V. That the government of Cuba will execute, and as far as necessary extend, the plans already devised or other plans to be mutually agreed upon, for the sanitation of the cities of the island, to the end that a recurrence of epidemic and infectious diseases may be prevented, thereby assuring protection to the people and commerce of Cuba, as well as to the commerce of the southern ports of the United States and the people residing therein.

VII. That to enable the United States to maintain the independence of Cuba, and to protect the people thereof, as well as for its own defense, the government of Cuba will sell or lease to the United States lands necessary for coaling or naval stations at certain specified points to be agreed upon with the President of the United States."

VIII. That by way of further assurance the government of Cuba will embody the foregoing provisions in a permanent treaty with the United States.

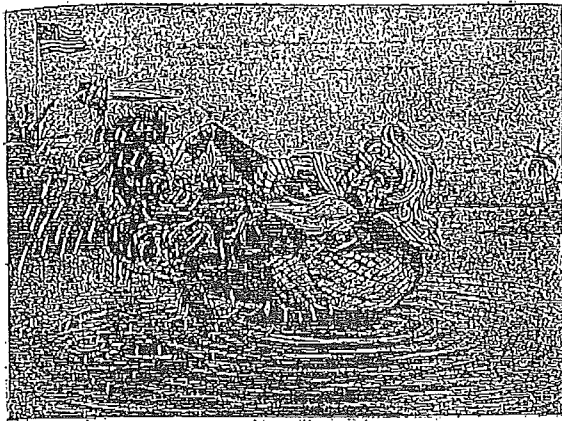
Source: "The Platt Amendment," in *Treaties and Other International Agreements of the United States of America, 1776-1949*, vol. 8, ed. C.I. Bevans (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), pp. 1116-17.

Document-Based Assessment

American Imperialism

Should the United States annex territories in order to establish a global empire? Or should it honor American roots by granting self-rule to the native peoples of those lands? Use your knowledge of the debate over American Imperialism and the following documents to answer questions 1 through 4.

Document A



Uncle Sam Wrestles With Filipino Insurgency

Document B

The taking of the Philippines does not violate the principles of the Declaration of Independence, but will spread them among a people who have never known liberty and who in a few years will be unwilling to leave the shelter of the American flag. . . . The form of government natural to the Asiatic has always been despotism. . . . [T]o abandon those islands is to leave them to anarchy, [and] to short-lived military dictatorships. . . .

Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, March 1900

Document C

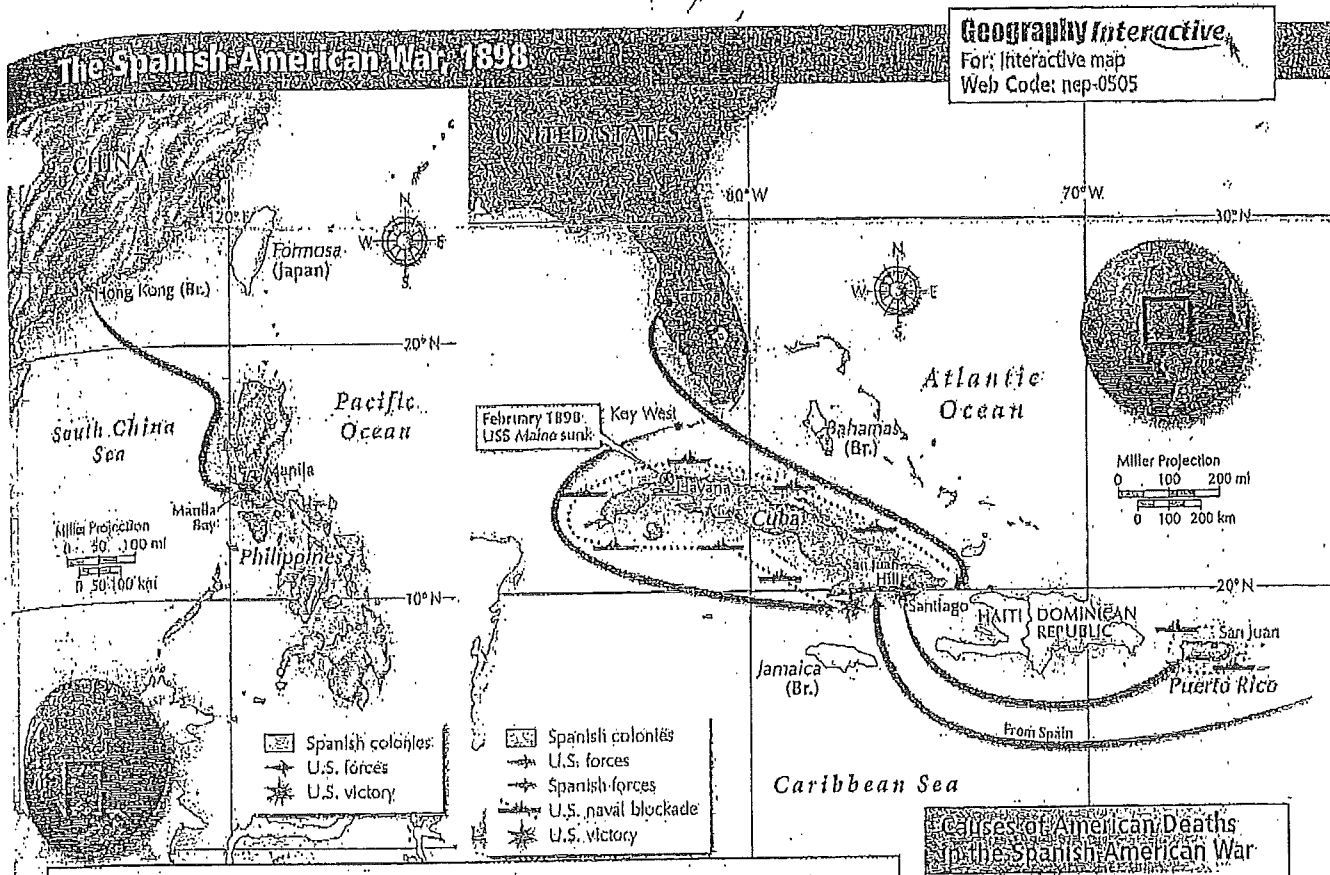
I wanted the American eagle to go screaming into the Pacific. It seemed tiresome and tame for it to content itself with the Rockies. Why not spread its wings over the Philippines, I asked myself? And I thought it would be a real good thing to do. . . . But I have thought some more, since then, and I have read carefully the treaty of Paris, and I have seen that we do not intend to free, but to subjugate the people of the Philippines. We have gone there to conquer, not to redeem. . . . And so I am an anti-imperialist. I am opposed to having the eagle put its talons on any other land.

Mark Twain, October 1900

Document D



- Which of the documents is a primary source that supports the maintenance of American control over the Philippines to ensure a stable government there?
 - Document A
 - Document B
 - Document C
 - Document D
- According to Document A, how did the cartoonist choose to portray the Filipino population?
 - Filipinos are resisting the American presence in the Philippines.
 - Filipinos are cooperating with American officials to maintain U.S. control.
 - Filipinos are fleeing their homes in fear of American soldiers.
 - Filipinos are celebrating their independence from Spain.
- Mark Twain most closely agrees with which of the other documents?
 - Documents A and D
 - Documents A and B
 - Document B
 - Document D
- Writing Task** How did the principles of the American Revolution influence the debate over American Imperialism in the Philippines? Use your knowledge of the aftermath of the Spanish-American War and specific evidence from the primary sources above to support your opinion.



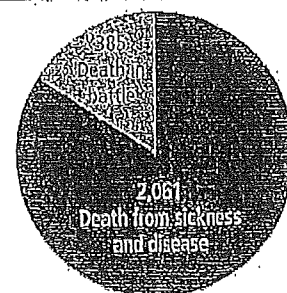
Map Skills The Spanish-American War was fought on two fronts on opposite sides of the world. The United States won a quick victory over Spain.

1. Locate: (a) Havana, (b) Puerto Rico, (c) Hong Kong, (d) the Philippines

2. Regions Identify the two different regions of the world in which the war was fought.

3. Draw Conclusions Why do you think more Americans died from sickness and disease than in battle?

Causes of American Deaths in the Spanish-American War



Source: Historical Statistics of the United States

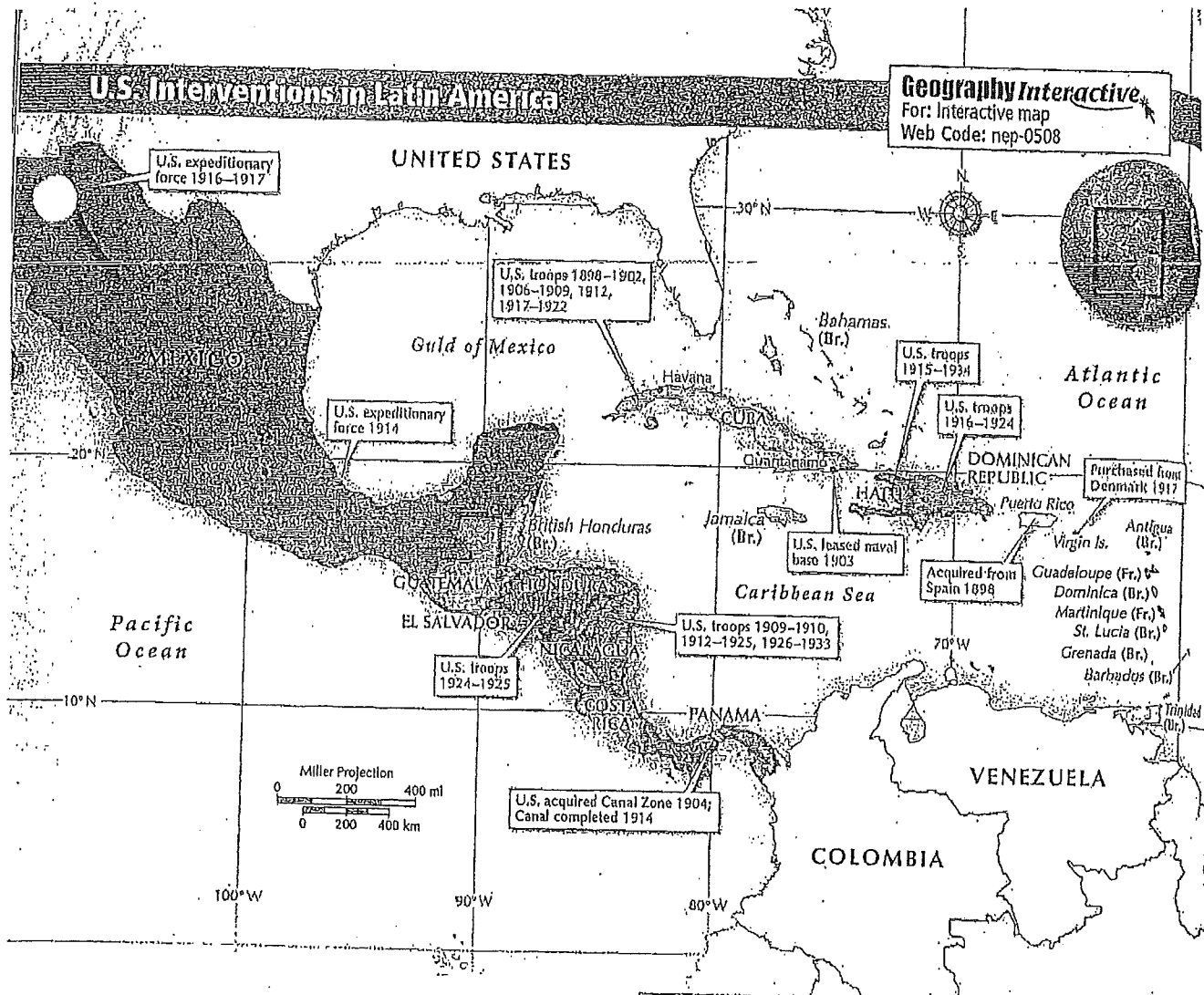
possession, the fighting had come to an end. Although almost 3,000 Americans died during the war, only around 380 died in combat. Disease, especially malaria and yellow fever, caused most of the deaths.

Checkpoint How did the Rough Riders and African American cavalry units contribute to the war effort?

Effects of the War

Secretary of State John Hay referred to the conflict with Spain as a "splendid little war" because of the ease and thoroughness of America's victory. Although the war may have been "splendid," it created a new dilemma for Americans: What should the United States do with Spain's former possessions?

The Treaty of Paris Signed by Spain and the United States in December 1898, the Treaty of Paris officially ended the war. Spain gave up control of Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Pacific island of Guam. It also sold the Philippines to the United States for \$20 million.



Map Skills The United States repeatedly intervened in the affairs of its Latin American neighbors from the time of the Spanish-American War through the early 1900s.

- 1. Locate:** (a) Cuba, (b) Mexico, (c) Veracruz, (d) Nicaragua, (e) Panama Canal Zone
- 2. Place** Why was Panama an ideal place for the construction of a canal?
- 3. Analyze** Why was Cuba vital to U.S. operations in Central America and the Caribbean?

◀ Wielding the Big Stick

With his update to the Monroe Doctrine, Roosevelt wanted only "to see neighboring countries stable, orderly, and prosperous." But if those governments were to collapse, the United States stood ready to restore order and prevent European intervention.